GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HOME AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:440
ANSWERED ON:23.04.2002
PRESENCE OF MILITANTS NEAR THE VAISHNO DEVI SHRINE
GADDAM GANGA REDDY;RAM SINGH KASWAN

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether five Pakistan backed militants were killed by the security forces from Katra base town for shrine of renowned Vaishno Devi in Jammu and Kashmir in March, 2002;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government have strengthened the security in this region since lakhs of pilgrims visit Vaishno Devi every year; and

(d) if so, the measures taken by the Government for the safety/security of pilgrims visiting Vaishno Devi?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI CH. VIDYASAGAR RAO)

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARAS (a) TO (d) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 44O ANSWER ON 23.4.2002.

(a) and (b): On 8.3.2002, 5 terrorists were killed in an encounter with Security Forces near Gobian Nullah at village Gobian Palkhandi under Police Station Katra, District Udhampur, which is about 21 kms from Katra.Two Police Constables also sustained injuries in the encounter. A huge quantity of arms/ammunition including 03 AK Rifles, 15 AK magazines, 01 UMG, 01 UMG Drum, 02 wireless sets, 09 hand grenades, 06 grenade launchers, 01 Pistol, 02 Pistol magazines etc. were recovered from the slain terrorists. The area being hilly, the precipice separating the hill on which Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine is located and Gobian is very steep, making it virtually impossible for the shrine to be accessed from that side.

(c) and (d): The State Government has informed that all the important religious places not only in Jammu province but also elsewhere in the State are guarded by static guards in addition to the area security. Following the Gobian incident, Director General of Police, J&K took a special review meeting and immediate steps to strengthen the security arrangements have been initiated accordingly.

The Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine including the route from Katra is guarded by CRPF conjointly with the State Police and a number of security rings are in place around the shrine.